

Jan. 2, 1945
Belgium

Mornin', my sweet,

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The morning had been a fine one in the village for those who were able to stand and walk. Events revolved about two occurrences of cosmic import, which will be known hereafter in the annals as "The Affair of the German Parachutist" and as "The Affair of the Unexploded Bombs." The former commenced for us by a breathless yokel arriving with the story of heroic struggles between the villagers and a German parachutist culminating in a situation whereby three of the former were sitting on the latter in a field, while he, the courier, sought aid from the American soldier. Needless to say, we jumped from our sacks and sped to the scene, but alas, some forehanded Joes in a jeep had passed, and bundled him off. The other affair was a residue of the bombing New Year's Eve. The doctor's house, not the one who was a collaborator and is now in jail, but the one who lives down by the tramway tracks, was the setting. A good part of the village spent the rest of the morning tramping through the house and picking up, poking, kicking and otherwise playing with the several unexploded anti personnel bombs lying around there. For some reason, none of them went off under such mistreatment, but, of course, it was exciting to have the possibility ever present. Later on, a group of our Engineers arrived and took care of the situation neatly and with dispatch.

The afternoon was quiet, punctuated only by a christening wherein the father, god-parents, and mid-wife tied on a neat one in the local pub. They dunk the brats so soon after birth here that the mothers always miss out on the fun - a situation not without parallel as regards certain celebrations in the old U.S.

The evening meal was highly undesirable but included some cheese. So we went into the cooking business and wound up with lobster a la Newburg, corn, Melba toast, and mangoes for desert.

Later Fearless Phil, Tireless Nick, and myself eased down to the local pub where we soon became involved in a colorful group in the kitchen which included such rare characters as an American soldier (chief celebrant) in a black silk hat (erstwhile a German burgomaster's) and a Harpo Marx motorcycle horn; a black-market money operator of notable wealth; a "captain" in The Belgian underground (officially credited with 16 gestapo men in the past

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2 years); the mamen of the pub; and certain other shady and furtive individuals who came & went, and provided a sort of atmospheric background to the main conversation of champagne and cognac, of which there seemed to be a limitless supply (at the expense of the money-changer)- and so later on, home in the moonlight.

As you can see, this village continues to be the scene of events out of this world. I don't know when I've ever been to a more preposterous and utterly enjoyable spot.

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Always,

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